

ANNUAL REPORT **Special Education Advisory Panel** **2002-2003**

BY S. BART SIMMONS, CHAIRPERSON



"Working to Improve Special Education
Services in Idaho"

Special Education Advisory Panel

2002-2003 Membership

S. Bart Simmons	Chair Region III, IASEA
Michelle Doty	Vice Chair Parent Consumer
Charlotte Silva	Higher Education Representative
Beverly Benge	Higher Education Representative
Susan Haffner	Parent Consumer Regular Education Teacher
Kim Hegg-James	Parent Consumer
Brenda Arrillaga	Secondary Transition Representative
John Burns	Parent Consumer
Ross Edmunds	Family & Children's Services Department of Health & Welfare
Varina Hallock (Rina)	Parent Consumer Special Education Teacher
Mont Hibbard	Region I, IASEA
Janet Hobbs	Parent Consumer
Barbara B. Housley	Parent Consumer
Julie Johnson	Idaho Dept. of Corrections
Claire Kiener	Parent Consumer
Jeffrey S. Lang	Special Education Teacher
Steven C. McNeel	General Education Teacher
Catherine Pierce	Parent Consumer/ General Education Teacher
Glenda Rohrbach	Dept. of Juvenile Corrections
Susan Seaman	Charter School Representative
Mary K. Stewart (Hammons)	Parent Consumer
Robbie Storla	Student Consumer
Linda E. Sundstrom	Parent Consumer
Angie Tate	Parent Consumer
Steven J. Thomas	Parent Consumer

PANEL ACTIVITIES

The panel held three, two-day meetings during the 2002-03 year on the following dates.

- ✿ September 19th and 20th, 2002
- ✿ January 30th-31st, 2003
- ✿ April 3rd-4th, 2003 (The 4th was canceled as there was not a quorum of members at the meeting.)

The Special Education Advisory Panel (SEAP) and the Idaho Infant Toddler Interagency Coordinating Council (ICC) met the afternoon of January 31st, 2003 to discuss the State Plan.

The Executive Committee consisted of the following members: Bart Simmons, Chair; Michelle Doty; Vice Chair; Beverly Benge; Susan Haffner; and Kim Hegg-James. The Executive Committee held five meetings on the following dates.

- 📅 August 13th, 2002
- 📅 August 30th, 2002 (per Conference Call)
- 📅 September 20th, 2002
- 📅 January 7th, 2003 (per Conference Call)
- 📅 June 30th, 2003 (per Conference Call)

New member orientation was held at the September 2002 meeting. The new panel members were as follows.

- 📅 Charlotte Silva, Higher Education Representative
- 📅 Beverly Benge, Higher Education Representative
- 📅 Brenda Arrillaga, Secondary Transition Representative
- 📅 Mary K. Stewart (Hammons), Parent Consumer
- 📅 Linda E. Sundstrom, Parent Consumer
- 📅 Angie Tate, Parent Consumer
- 📅 Robbie Storla, Student
- 📅 Ross Edmunds, Agency Representative

A printed agenda that had been pre-approved by the Executive Committee was used at each of the above meetings. S. Bart Simmons, Chair, chaired and conducted each meeting. All panel members were given an opportunity to be heard and express their ideas and opinions. You will read the results of many of these ideas and opinions in the recommendations addressed in this report.

The panel labored long and hard on many challenging and difficult issues. The commitment of all attending members was apparent and well focused. The most common and reoccurring issues discussed and brought up throughout the year were definitely, “How can parents be more effectively involved in their child’s education?” and “What can the Bureau of Special Education and local school districts do to cause the

Individualized Education Program (IEP) process to be more effective?”
Recommendations regarding these issues will be addressed in this report.

Throughout the year, members became more aware of the challenges faced by the Idaho State Department of Education (ISDE) in trying to interface with agencies/people such as the legislature, Idaho State Board of Education, Department of Health and Welfare (DHW), and Office of Special Education Programs (OSEP) in Washington DC. It became clear to panel members that monitoring programs for children with special needs and advocating for these children is a monumental undertaking. On behalf of the Special Education Advisory Panel (SEAP), I would like to thank Dr. Howard and the Bureau of Special Education staff for doing an outstanding job in these very trying and difficult times. The leadership of Dr. Howard, Dr. Jana Jones, Russ Hammond and other department staff is greatly appreciated.

The panel was especially grateful to the presenters at our meetings. All of the presentations were very informative to the SEAP membership. The panel would like to extend our thanks to the presenters below.

- ✚ Update on ISDE Activities—Dr. Robert West, Chief Deputy Superintendent, ISDE
- ✚ Special Education Acronyms—Jacque Hyatt, ISDE
- ✚ Continuous Improvement Monitoring Plan (CIMP)—Jean Taylor, ISDE
- ✚ No Child Left Behind—Jacque Hyatt, ISDE
- ✚ Vocational Rehabilitation Issues—Sue Payne, Idaho Division of Vocational Rehabilitation (IDVR)
- ✚ Medicaid Issues—Jana Jones, Bureau Chief, Bureau of Special Education
- ✚ Early Childhood Transitions—Carolee Eslinger, DHW, and Jacque Hyatt, ISDE
- ✚ Cross-Agency Data Systems—Jean Taylor, ISDE, and Charlie Peterson, DHW
- ✚ Early Childhood Standards—Mary Bostick, ISDE
- ✚ State Improvement Grant (SIG) Updates—Russ Hammond, ISDE
- ✚ Needs of Deaf and Hard of Hearing Individuals—Penny Cooper, Council for the Deaf and Hard of Hearing
- ✚ The Education of Blind/Visually Impaired Students Task Force—Larry Streeter, ISDE

The SEAP consists of three sub-committees. These are the (1) Personnel Preparation/ Human Resources Committee with Beverly Benge as chairperson; (2) Legislative/Public Policy Committee with Susan Haffner as chairperson; and (3) State Improvement Grant Committee (SIG) with Kim Hegg-James as chairperson. These committees were appointed in September and met during the SEAP meetings to develop recommendations. Lively discussions were ever present as each committee member voiced his/her opinions and concerns.

The Bureau of Special Education staff provided the panel with needed information and reports throughout the year. Russ Hammond, ISDE liaison, and Margie Strong, ISDE secretary, were very facilitative in their roles. Both were knowledgeable and helpful in too many ways to enumerate. Dr. Jana Jones was very helpful with knowledge and assistance when and where needed. The panel feels very fortunate to have Dr. Jones as Bureau Chief and strongly recommends that everything be done to keep her in her present position.

A professional rapport evolved during the year as panel members became better acquainted with one another. Some very strong opinions and bias were evident among new members in the first meeting. The panel soon melded into a very hard-working and cohesive group. The panel recognized the many challenges faced by the ISDE in fulfilling its responsibilities to meet the needs of children with special needs. Thank you for your leadership, energy and the commitment that you give to meeting these challenges.

Recommendations

The Panel has broken the following recommendations into three categories. These are Legislative/Public Policy, Personnel Preparation/Human Resources, and Parent/Student Involvement. The Panel has aligned the recommendations to the ISDE *Special Education/Early Intervention Plan* and these corresponding goals are referenced following each recommendation. An outline of the goals follows.

Goal One - Idaho will include stakeholders in the decision-making process at all levels (individual, building, district, and state) to ensure improved outcomes for students with disabilities and gifted/talented (G/T) students.

- Increased parent participation in the IEP and eligibility processes.
- Decrease the number of complaints and hearings by developing better working relationships between parents and educators.
- Identify methods and develop training that will increase meaningful participation by students in their transition planning for moving into adult environments.

Goal Two – Personnel in Idaho are trained to ensure that all students with disabilities at all age levels receive appropriate services in the least restrictive environments.

- Increase the percentage of fully certificated special education personnel.
- Increase the retention rate of special education teachers.
- Decrease the caseload of special education teachers in Idaho.
- Maintain a high percentage of students with disabilities served in the general education setting.
- Maintain the low level of suspension/expulsion rates of students with disabilities in Idaho.

Goal Three – Students outcomes will improve as a result of the Bureau of Special Education leadership and effective general supervision of special education and gifted/talented services in Idaho.

- Increase the graduation rate and decrease the dropout rate of students with disabilities in Idaho.
- Improve participation and performance on statewide assessments by students with disabilities in Idaho.
- Revise the Idaho Alternate Assessment (IAA) to produce comparable results.
- Develop an aligned data system across agencies (H & W, Vocational Rehab., etc.) to track student outcomes.

Legislative/Public Policy Recommendations

1. ISDE will implement *No Child Left Behind (NCLB)* and the reauthorization of *IDEA* in a manner that does not adversely affect children with special needs.
2. More oral programs will be offered for deaf students. SEAP recommends that a universal design for learning (UDL) best practices be used for all children with special needs requiring that each individualized need be taken into consideration when designing Individualized Education Programs (IEPs). IEP teams will select appropriate devices and services for children with low incidence, hearing, visual and communication impairments, including but not limited to assistive and modified classroom technology, sign language, and communication programs. ISDE will promote training for district personnel in the areas of Universal Design for Learning (UDL).
3. SEAP recommends that the ISDE pass on SEAP recommendations to various organizations not limited to, but including superintendents, special education directors, etc.

Personnel Preparation/ Human Resources Recommendations

1. The ISDE will research methods to provide effective, accessible training at the local, district level.
2. Through the monitoring process, the ISDE will insure that educational agencies comply with the Federal and State requirements for paraprofessional qualifications, training and supervision.

3. The SEAP recommends training for all Idaho educators regarding the constant, reliable interpretation of valid accommodations/adaptations for all state mandated assessments, including impact upon accountability.
4. The ISDE will reduce special education teachers' workloads in managing each case. This will be done through a national study regarding paperwork (if offered), a maximum caseload policy, support of legislation and other innovative techniques such as hiring paperwork managers.

Parent/Student Involvement Recommendations

1. The ISDE will collaborate with representatives of LEAs and IPUL on the development and publication of an informative, but parent friendly manual intended to empower parents in the educational process of their children with disabilities. The manual should be used as a tool in the training of educators and parents across the state. This manual maybe in a Q and A style and address the following topics:
 - How educators can work with and involve parents, students and stakeholders in order to promote student success in school.
 - Informing parents and educators of role of such community resources as CO-AD, IPUL and IFFCMH.
 - Clarifying the rights and responsibilities of parents in the IEP process
 - Informing educators and parents of the appropriate use of accommodations/adaptations on the IEP in regard to instruction and assessments.

Conclusions

The Special Education Advisory Panel recommends that the Idaho State Department of Education administration continue to support and follow through with the panel's recommendations.

Please note the following topics that have been held for discussion during the 2003-2004 academic year.

1. The Executive Committee of SEAP and the ISDE staff will determine the best way for the SEAP to solicit public input and to bring about a public awareness of the purpose and activities of the SEAP.
2. Should Gifted and Talented (GT) issues be put on an IEP?
3. Unmet need: Programs for children who are GT and dual exceptionality. These programs are being reduced or cut. Recommend sharing successfully adapted subject materials.
4. ISDE will promote pre-service programs that will assist in providing qualified personnel to work in education.
5. Documentation that provides more detail about the disputes (to assist districts in the prevention of future disputes) will be shared with districts.